

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

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R 012030Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6945

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 2360

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ABUD TD

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATION COSTS

FOR ASST SEC THOMAS

REF: ASST SEC THOMAS' LTR OF AUG 23, 1974

1. FY-1974 COSTS -- ACTUAL REIMBURSABLE REPRESENTATION COSTS DURING LAST FISCAL YEAR TOTALLED \$7,943, OF WHICH \$2,042 WERE OUT OF POCKET COSTS FOR WHICH NO FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE TO COVER.

2. FY-1975 -- DURING FIRST QUARTER OF FY-1975 OUR ACTUAL COSTS HAVE TOTALLED \$2,666 FOR AN ANNUAL RATE OF \$10,664 AGAINST AN INITIAL APPORTIONMENT TO THE EMBASSY OF ONLY \$3,600 FOR FY-1975.

3. NON-REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES INCURRED IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST -- WE DO NOT HAVE A FULL 12-MONTH COMPILATION OF SUCH FIGURES BUT EXPERIENCE WITH KEEPING RECORDS DURING 1974 INDICATES THAT OUT OF POCKET COSTS TO OFFICERS FOR THESE EXPENSES IS RUNNING NOW AT ABOUT \$600 ANNUALLY.

4. INFLATION -- AFTER MANY YEARS OF RELATIVE PRICE STABILITY, PRICES IN TRINIDAD BEGAN TO RISE SHARPLY IN 1973. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO ACCURATE MEASURE OF INFLATION HERE, A MONTHLY RETAIL PRICE INDEX BASED ON A LOW-INCOME FAMILY'S "SHOPPING BASKET" PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE OF PRICE TRENDS. COSTS OF MANY ITEMS AND SERVICES USED FOR REPRESENTATIONAL ENTERTAINING HAVE RISEN EVEN FASTER THAN THE GOODS REPRESENTED IN THE RETAIL PRICE
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INDEX. EVER SINCE NOVEMBER 1973 THE RETAIL PRICE INDEX HAS

BEEN MORE THAN 20 PERCENT ABOVE THE CORRESPONDING MONTH IN THE
PREVIOUS YEAR AND AS OF AUGUST 1974 (LATEST MONTH AVAILABLE)
IT WAS 24.5 PERCENT ABOVE AUGUST 1973.

5. SPECIAL FACTORS -- IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CONDUCT ANY
BUSINESS WITH GOVT OF TRINIDAD IN GOVT OFFICES AND ALMOST ALL
EMBASSY BUSINESS IS CONDUCTED AT REPRESENTATIONAL LUNCHEES,
DINNERS, COCKTAIL PARTIES, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS, ETC.
WE HAVE PROJECTED EXPANDED TRADE PROMOTION EFFORT THIS FISCAL
YEAR WHICH WILL DEFINITELY BE SOMEWHAT ADUMBRATED IF FURTHER
REPRESENTATION FUNDS DO NOT BECOME AVAILABLE.
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